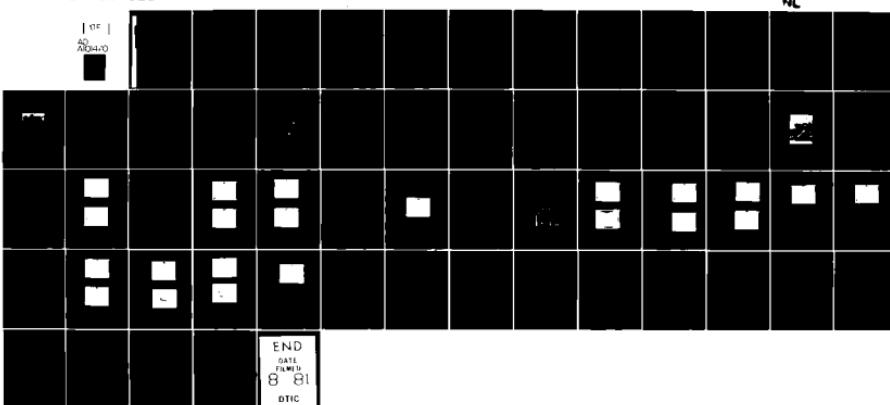


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CONTINUATION OF STUDY OF HETEROJUNCTION GATE  
GaAs FIELD EFFECT TRANSISTORS

FINAL REPORT

Contract No. N00173-80-C-0179

Prepared for:

Naval Research Laboratory  
Washington, DC 20375

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AlGaAs/GaAs heterojunction gate GaAs FETs have been fabricated with molecular beam epitaxy (MBE) and organometallic vapor phase epitaxy (OM-VPE), which allow for enhanced uniformity and reproducibility. The best results were obtained with MBE n-GaAs active layers and OM-VPE gate layers of p-AlGaAs and p <sup>+</sup> -GaAs. Process steps such as a plasma ash and <u>in situ</u> heat cleaning of the mesa-etched layer before OM-VPE gate growth must be taken in order to ensure that the interface is clean and free of carbon contamination.		

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Moreover, a very thin (200 Å)  $p^+$ -GaAs layer between the n-GaAs channel and the  $p^+$ -AlGaAs helps to isolate the actual  $p^+$ n gate junction from oxygen that is gettered into AlGaAs grown by OM-VPE. C-V measurements indicate a 1.3V built-in voltage for this junction, while forward I-V characteristics give a nonideality factor  $n = 2$  and are similar to those of a GaAs  $p^+$ n junction. Thus the electrical characteristics of the heterojunction are retained, along with the advantages of selective undercut etching and self-aligned metal.

Since normally-off HJFETs are desired for direct coupling of logic circuits, control of threshold voltage is very important. Although HJFETs with record high saturation currents were produced with buffered active layers grown by both chloride transport VPE and MBE, extremely good threshold voltage control (variations of 0.1-0.2V over a 1-cm<sup>2</sup> wafer) was achieved with MBE. Saturation currents for normally-off HJFETs followed a square law and were the highest on record, greater than 50  $\mu$ A/ $\mu$ m<sup>2</sup>-V<sup>2</sup> for 3 x 300  $\mu$ m and 1 x 300  $\mu$ m gate devices. Pt-Au gate metal is especially useful for achieving self-aligned, undercut-etched 1- $\mu$ m gate devices with low gate resistance. Results are discussed in the light of various process alternatives for GaAs digital ICs, and possible future developments for the HJFET are outlined.

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## ABSTRACT

AlGaAs/GaAs heterojunction gate GaAs FETs have been fabricated with molecular beam epitaxy (MBE) and organometallic vapor phase epitaxy (OM-VPE), which allow for enhanced uniformity and reproducibility. The best results were obtained with MBE n-GaAs active layers and OM-VPE gate layers of  $p^+$ -AlGaAs and  $p^+$ -GaAs. Process steps such as a plasma ash and in situ heat cleaning of the mesa-etched layer before OM-VPE gate growth must be taken in order to ensure that the interface is clean and free of carbon contamination. Moreover, a very thin (200 Å)  $p^+$ -GaAs layer between the n-GaAs channel and the  $p^+$ -AlGaAs helps to isolate the actual  $p^+n$  gate junction from oxygen that is gettered into AlGaAs grown by OM-VPE. C-V measurements indicate a 1.3V built-in voltage for this junction, while forward I-V characteristics give a nonideality factor  $n = 2$  and are similar to those of a GaAs  $p^+n$  junction. Thus the electrical characteristics of the heterojunction are retained, along with the advantages of selective undercut etching and self-aligned metal.

Since normally-off HJFETs are desired for direct coupling of logic circuits, control of threshold voltage is very important. Although HJFETs with record high saturation currents were produced with buffered active layers grown by both chloride transport VPE and MBE, extremely good threshold voltage control (variations of 0.1-0.2V over a 1-cm<sup>2</sup> wafer) was achieved with MBE. Saturation currents for normally-off HJFETs followed a square law and were the highest on record, greater than 50  $\mu A/\mu m \cdot V^2$  for 3 x 300  $\mu m$  and 1 x 300  $\mu m$  gate devices. Pt-Au gate metal is especially useful for achieving self-aligned, undercut-etched 1- $\mu m$  gate devices with low gate resistance. Results are discussed in the light of various process alternatives for GaAs digital ICs, and possible future developments for the HJFET are outlined.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The first efforts to fabricate p-Al<sub>0.5</sub>Ga<sub>0.5</sub>As/n-GaAs heterojunction gate field-effect transistors (HJFETs)<sup>1,2</sup> used chloride-transport vapor-phase epitaxial (VPE) n-GaAs active layers and liquid-phase epitaxial (LPE) gate layers. An adequate p-n heterojunction was achieved, probably because of the slight meltback of the n-GaAs active layer during LPE. However, there were some problems with uniformity and minimum thickness of the LPE gate layers, as well as threshold voltage control problems with the VPE active layers, that would have to be corrected before the technique could be used to make integrated circuits.

In the next phase of the program at Varian,<sup>3</sup> the gate layers were grown by organometallic vapor-phase epitaxy (OM-VPE), which produced very uniform, reproducible gate structures, a substantial improvement over LPE. Meanwhile, a slight problem with the substrate/active layer interface was cleared up by growing a buffer layer in the VPE step, and the pH 7.05 superoxol etch for GaAs (which requires careful pH monitoring and frequent replacement) was replaced by citric acid. The OM-VPE gate layers usually suffered from considerable oxygen content in the AlGaAs, a fact that was always suspected but not verified by secondary ion mass spectrometry (SIMS) until after that phase of the program was over. The oxygen problem, along with uncertainties concerning wafer preparation and growth of the gate layers by OM-VPE, led to unsatisfactory heterojunctions and HJFETs whose performance was inferior to that of previous VPE/LPE HJFETs.

This stage of the HJFET program began with an intense effort to improve the heterojunction interface. The structure shown in Fig. 1 was adopted for the gates -- the extra thin layer of p-GaAs is possible with OM-VPE and was inserted in order to isolate the p-n junction from the AlGaAs. The in-diffusion of Zn dopant also helps to move the junction away from the AlGaAs. A GaAs p-n homojunction has nearly the same

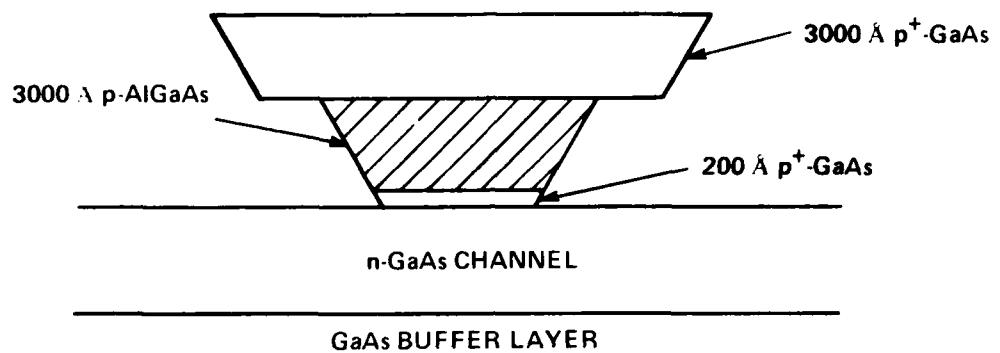


Fig. 1 Self-aligned JFET gate.

built-in voltage as an AlGaAs/GaAs heterojunction and should be similar to the ideal heterojunction as an FET gate. We will continue to refer to this device as an HJFET. AlGaAs is still needed, in order to retain the selective etching and self-alignment features of the device, but now the device is much less sensitive to oxygen contamination in the AlGaAs. We have at the same time developed gettering techniques to remove the oxygen from the AlGaAs, so the thin p-GaAs layer may not be required in the future.

Considerable attention was paid to preparation of the wafers before OM-VPE gate growth. For example, in order to avoid carbon contamination of the surface, photoresist residue must be removed by oxygen plasma ash and organic solvents must be avoided beyond a certain point. Details of these processes will be given in Section II. After much effort, the gate junctions were improved and HJFETs were performing well.

Figure 2 is a chart showing achievements in this program, when they came about, and approximate expenditures each month. The really major milestones are 1, 3, and 4 -- notice that each of these involved about the same expenditure. Milestone 2 (normally-off VPE/OM HJFETs) was achieved over part of a wafer when a VPE layer was thinned the proper amount. A really significant number of normally-off HJFETs had to wait for Milestone 3. This chart was prepared in order to summarize the results under this program, and to emphasize how much had to be expended just to get the HJFET working acceptably. It should be remembered that other achievements such as the characterization of various p-n heterojunction diodes and work on ring oscillator circuits (both discussed later) are not included in Fig. 2.

Nearly all the HJFETs reported in this work were fabricated with VPE and molecular beam epitaxy (MBE) for the n-GaAs active layers, and OM-VPE or MBE or the gate layers. MBE was most satisfactory for the

### MILESTONES

- 1 - N-0n VPE/0M 3-11m FET
- 2 - N-Off VPE/0M 3-11m FET
- 3 - N-Off MBE/0M 3-11m FET
- 4 - MBE/0M Pt-Au 1-11m FET

### APPROXIMATE MILESTONE COST

- 1 - \$24K
- 2 - \$13K
- 3 - \$29K
- 4 - \$28K

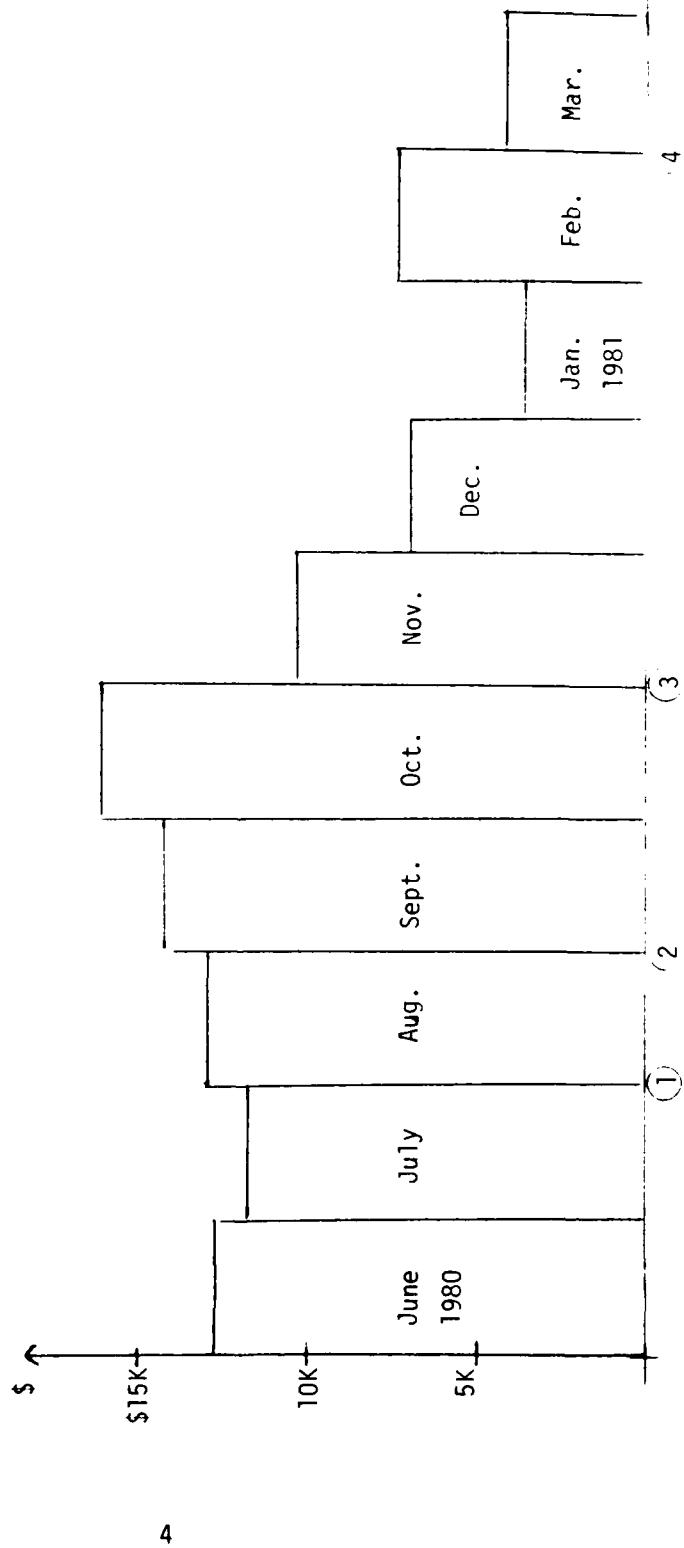


Fig. 2 HJFET achievements and spending.

active layer of normally-off (N-Off) HJFETs because very uniform thin layers could be grown. The best HJFETs resulted when these layers were mesa-etched and gates were grown by OM-VPE. MBE gates were tried, too, but performance was not good because in situ etch techniques before gate growth were not available with MBE as they were with OM.

## 2. EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION

### 2.1 HJFET Fabrication

#### 2.1.1 Overall Process

The basic HJFET investigated has its heterojunction near a growth interface and is the same as reported previously,<sup>1-3</sup> a FET with two 150- $\mu$ m long gate stripes (Fig. 3). Connections are made to a gate pad, drain pad, and two source pads. Gate widths of 2, 5 and 7  $\mu$ m are available on alternate masks and the final width of the gate junction is determined by the undercut etch. In this work, the 5- $\mu$ m mask was used to simplify process development in the early stages, and later the 2- $\mu$ m mask was used. The resulting undercut gates were about 3  $\mu$ m and 1  $\mu$ m, respectively, and will often be referred to as such in this work. The basic process, emphasizing the alternatives available at two steps, is outlined in Fig. 4. Figure 5 is a more complete outline and focuses on the VPE and MBE active layers and OM gates, with which our most successful results were obtained. Comments on other process alternatives appear later.

An n-GaAs active layer doped at about  $10^{17}/\text{cm}^3$  is prepared by VPE or MBE, then mesa etched for isolation, and for low gate pad capacitance. Before FET processing, a VPE layer is grown thick (8-10V pinchoff with Au dots) and then is thinned appropriately. Normally-off devices were achieved when the pinchoff voltage at this stage was about 2V. This layer thickness requirement is due in part to the in situ HCl etch before OM gate growth, but is believed to be mostly due to the in-diffusion of the Zn dopant during OM gate growth. More about wafer preparation is discussed in the next section. The MBE layers can be grown to the proper thickness in one step and were usually not C-V characterized. The most successful MBE layers were doped at  $10^{17}/\text{cm}^3$  and nominally 1900  $\text{\AA}$  thick.

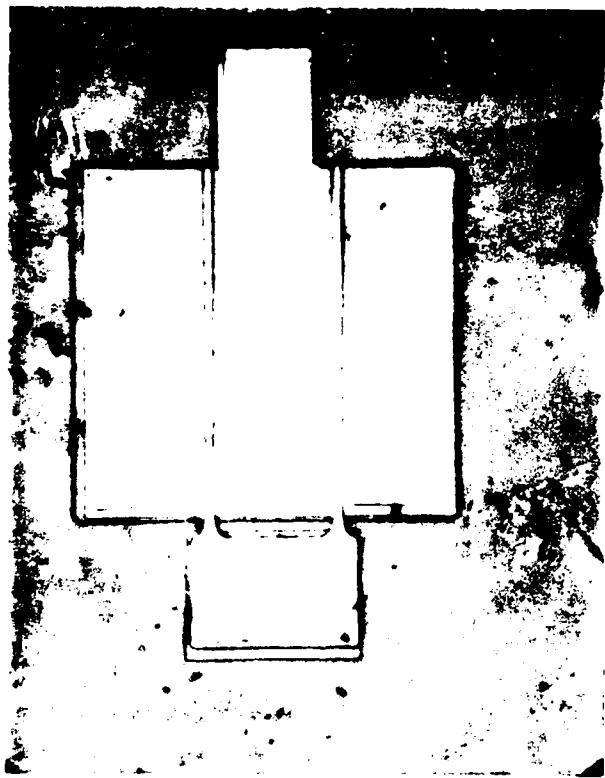


Fig. 3 Top view of completed HJFET.

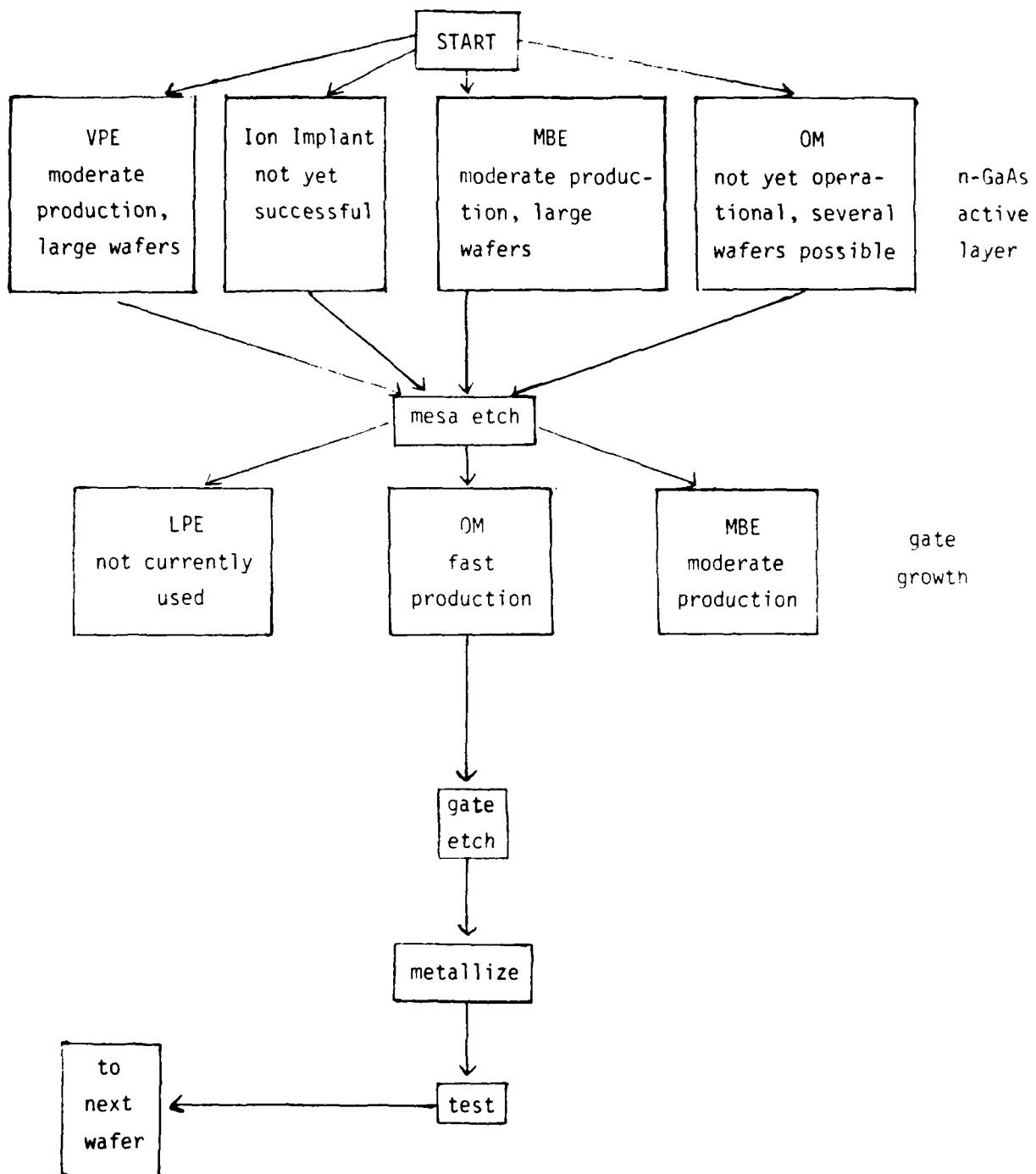


Fig. 4 Growth interface heterojunction FET process.

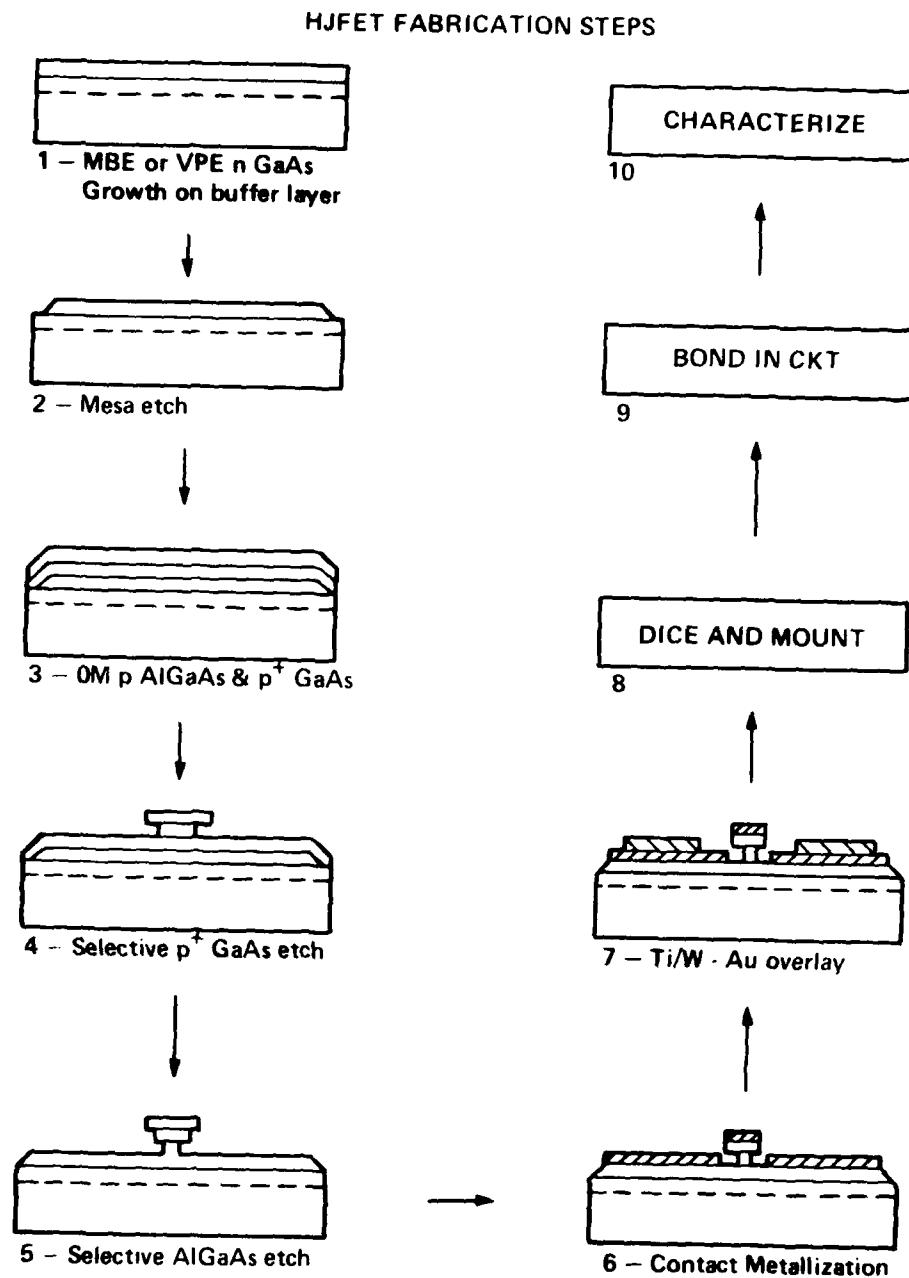


Fig. 5 Fabrication of heterojunction FET with OM gate layers.

After the mesa etch, the gates are grown by OM; then the gate mask is applied. Photoresist versus metal gate masks are discussed in Sec. 2.1.5. Selective etching with citric acid solution<sup>4</sup> and HF (discussed later) is done on the GaAs and AlGaAs, respectively. Ideally, a V-type gate cross section will result, as illustrated in Fig. 6. The semiconductor gate layers are thick enough to allow self-alignment of the AuGe/Ni/Au metal, applied in the next process step. The metal is alloyed at 450°C for 15 sec and results in a low-resistance ohmic contact to the source and drain. The devices can then be tested on a curve tracer. If desired, they can be readied for bonding by sputtering a metal overlay (1200 Å Ti-W/2000 Å Au), thinning to 150  $\mu$ m, plating the backside with electroless Pd, and dicing. Chips are screened by visual and I-V checks, and are then die bonded and wire bonded into carriers suitable for common source microwave measurements on an HP automatic network analyzer system.

### 2.1.2 Wafer Preparation for Heterojunction Growth

The first attempts to use OM gates for HJFETs were hampered by oxygen-doped AlGaAs and by contamination due to processing before the gate growth.<sup>3</sup> Even when it was arranged to grow a heterojunction in the OM reactor, the oxygen at the interface severely degraded the performance. The present HJFETs were begun by adopting the thin  $p^+$ -GaAs layer between the channel and the AlGaAs (as discussed earlier), to isolate the gate junction from oxygen. It was believed that wafer preparation for the OM gate growth was critical to obtaining a good junction, especially when such process refinements began to produce improvements in the HJFETs. A variety of procedures were permanently adopted for the mesa etch and wafer prep steps when high-performance FETs were finally achieved. These procedures are known to be sufficient, and most are believed necessary, although there was no strong motivation to study the later exhaustively.

	AuGe/Ni/Au
	n - GaAs
	n - GaAs buffer
	p - Al <sub>0.5</sub> Ga <sub>0.5</sub> As
	p <sup>+</sup> - GaAs

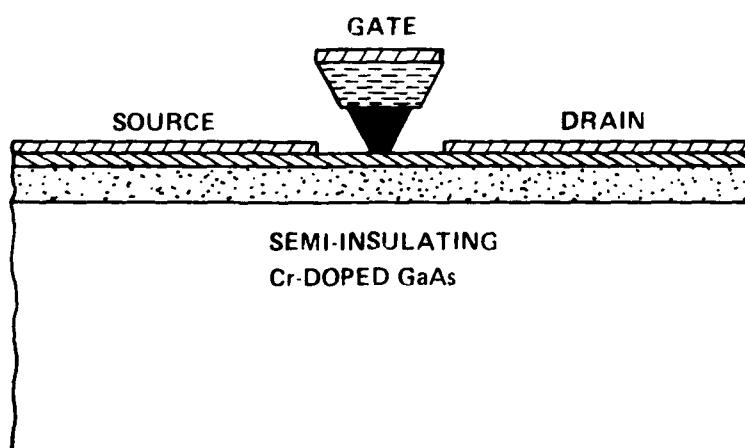


Fig. 6 Schematic Diagram of HJFET.

Since the VPE layers had to be thinned down and C-V profiled with Au dots at each step, some concern arose over how the Au would effect the GaAs surface, despite the fact that the dots were quickly removed. The heat of condensation of Au is known to be large enough to cause point defects in GaAs<sup>5</sup> and it is well known that Au dots will leave visible damage on a GaAs wafer if left on for, say, several weeks. In order to avoid a possible interfacial problem because of the Au dots, a sparse dot shadow mask was prepared so that very few of the resulting HJFETs will have had Au near the junction. The sparse dot mask is still quite adequate for C-V profiling and is now often used for production VPE MESFET material because of the concern over Au dot damage.

During the mesa etch step, there is photoresist on the very areas where the heterojunction will be. Since acetone does not completely remove AZ 1350J photoresist, there is a strong possibility of contamination from that hydrocarbon residue. In order to minimize this contamination, the wafer was oxidized in hot H<sub>2</sub>O before the mesa photoresist was deposited, so that after mesa etching some of the photoresist scum could be "lifted off" with HF. After that liftoff, the wafer was O<sub>2</sub> plasma ashed, to remove the rest of the scum, and a dilute HF solution removed the thin oxide formed during the plasma ash. No organic solvents were used after photoresist removal, to prevent carbon contamination. Immediately before loading into the OM reactor, the wafer was rinsed in straight H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. Before the beginning of OM gate growth, there was a high-temperature cleaning step and a brief HCl etch, in order to clean off native oxides and slightly etch the wafer.

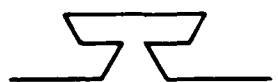
### 2.1.3 Gate Etch

The gate etch was done by well-known selective etch techniques. A citric acid/H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> solution<sup>4</sup> with k = 10 was used to etch the GaAs and stop at the AlGaAs. Then HF (straight from the bottle or 1:1

$H_2O:HF$ ) was used to etch the AlGaAs without etching the GaAs, so that an undercut was achieved. HCl also etches AlGaAs (especially when hot), but it was not used much in this work. It was found that the AlGaAs must be at least 50-60% Al in order to resist the citric acid etch, while for a pH ~.05 superoxol etch,<sup>1,2</sup> only 40-50% Al in the AlGaAs is required. The microprobe analysis used to estimate these percentages was done on ordinary HJFET wafers with 3000 Å thick AlGaAs layers. This was not quite thick enough for the depth of the microprobe electron beam, and the Al percentages could be known more accurately if special growth runs were done.

The cross section of the GaAs/AlGaAs selective etch is of some concern because the gate length, mechanical stability, and ability to evaporate self-aligned metal all depend on the gate etch. Self-alignment can be achieved as long as the AlGaAs is thick enough and there is some undercutting of the AlGaAs. For a short gate length, a V-type trapezoidal cross section is best, but it is difficult to arrange for this every time. Figure 7 shows gate cross sections that result when the gates are aligned parallel or perpendicular to elongated etch pits formed with 3:1:15  $NH_4OH: H_2O_2:H_2O$ . These etch pits distinguish the (110) from the (110) crystal directions.<sup>2-4</sup> Although the GaAs layer etches in the same way for each orientation, the AlGaAs layer may assume one of three shapes: V-trapezoid, inverted V-trapezoid, or hourglass. The alternatives shown in Fig. 7 are accompanied by numbers indicating how many times each was observed in the course of this work. Some of these cross sections seemed to correlate with whether or not the HF was diluted with water, with the percentage of Al in the AlGaAs, and with whether photoresist or metal was used as an etch mask, but no firm conclusions could be drawn. Eventually, the parallel direction was always used because a V-type AlGaAs cross section usually resulted. For narrow (2-μm mask) gates, the undercut for perpendicular orientation would usually separate the AlGaAs from the GaAs by the time the AlGaAs

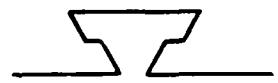
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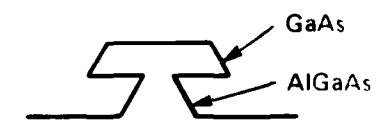
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GaAs  
AlGaAs

Fig. 7 Citric acid/HF gate etch profiles.

in the field was gone, and so for narrow gates the perpendicular direction could not be used at all. The GaAs/AlGaAs etching is manageable but is a good deal more complicated than previously reported.

Sometimes, following the HF etch of AlGaAs, the gate fields would have patches of AlGaAs which would either not etch off or would etch off only after prolonged immersion in HF. The latter alternative would destroy the FET gates and was not acceptable. The effect may have been due to a slight grading in the Al percentage near the interface, evidence for which is provided by the occasional success of 3:1:90 ( $\text{NH}_4\text{OH}$ : $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ : $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ) in removing the AlGaAs patches. This etch removes both GaAs and AlGaAs. However, the best way to avoid these interfacial problems was to move the wafer into the HF etch directly from the water bath used to stop the citric acid etch. The wafer should not be dried between etches.

#### 2.1.4 Anti-Leakage Cleanup Etches

Following the citric acid and HF gate etches, there is still a thin layer (a few hundred angstroms) of p-GaAs on top of the n-GaAs channel, due to the in-diffusion of Zn and to the growth of a thin p-GaAs layer below the AlGaAs. In the semi-insulating mesa field, the p-converted layer due to Zn diffusion is expected to be thicker because the background doping is much lower. This means that removal of the p-layer has to be done in two steps. The p-layer is first completely removed from the mesa with a brief citric acid etch (usually 5-10 sec for a  $k = 10$  etch). If wax is used to include a large mesa on the wafer at the time of the mesa etch, the material can be monitored for a change from p to n, as shown in Fig. 8. Three point contacts are shorted and applied with heavy pressure to approximate an ohmic contact, while one point contact is applied lightly to approximate a rectifying contact.

This technique was not completely reliable because it was difficult to

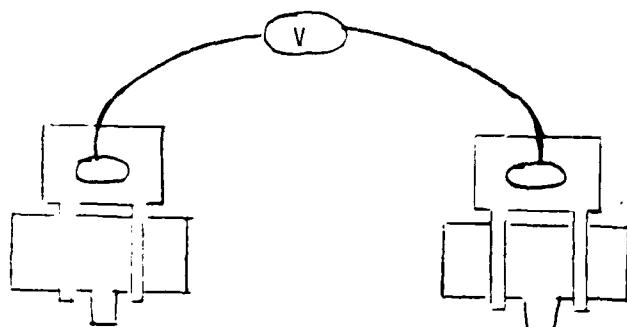
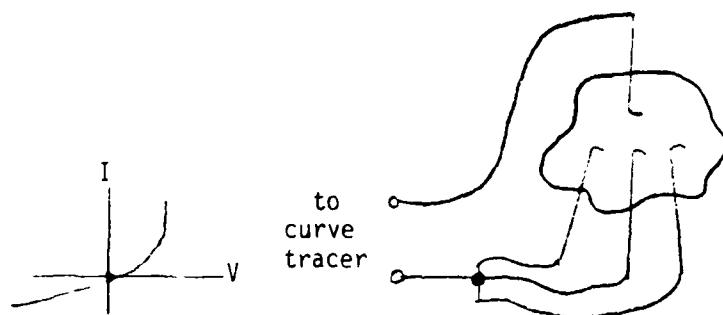
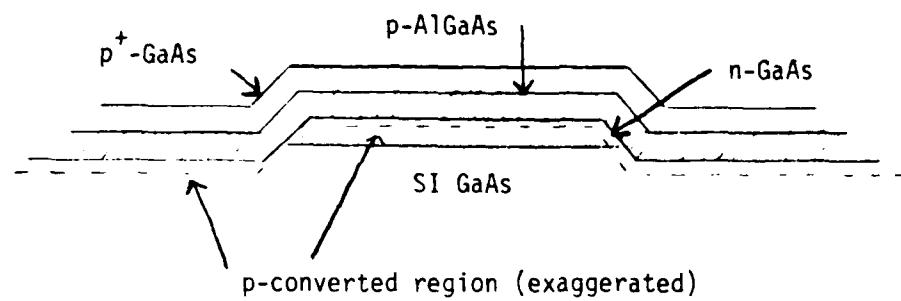


Fig. 8 Leakage current due to Zn diffusion.

establish the proper ohmic and rectifying contacts with the point probes, but it could probably be improved by wetting a probe with a liquid metal (Hg or Ga-Sn) for the rectifying contact. When Pt-Au metal gates were used for the gate etch, it was possible to monitor gate-to-epilayer leakage on the large mesa with the point probes until a leak-free n-type characteristic was achieved.

The rest of the p-converted layer in the mesa field must also be etched off so that it does not provide leakage paths between source, gate, and drain pads. It is best to complete the AuGe contact processing before attempting this etch, in order to avoid breaking the gates at the mesa edge. The FET channel may now be protected with the mesa mask, or with the (clear field) metal mask double exposed with the (dark field) overlay mask. The mesa mask allows monitoring of this etch by checking device-to-device isolation (see Fig. 8) while the double exposure scheme allows that as well as the complete I-V characterization of a device during etchback. Ten to twenty seconds of citric acid etch are typically required. Dramatic improvements in gate leakage were often seen with this etch.

#### 2.1.5 AuGe and PtAu Metal Gate Masks

The AuGe/Ni/Au self-aligned metal is chosen for low contact resistance on the source and drain (about  $10^{-6}$  ohm-cm<sup>2</sup>). If photoresist is used for the gate etch, then the same metal contacts the p-type GaAs gate but with a contact resistance of about  $10^{-4}$  ohm-cm<sup>2</sup>.<sup>1</sup> If a metal chosen to give low contact resistance to p<sup>+</sup>-GaAs could also be used as a gate etch mask, low contact resistance would be achieved for all connections. In the past, this failed in the case of Au-Mg and super-oxol etching of GaAs because of uneven undercutting.<sup>1</sup>

Our first attempts at etching with citric acid/HF and a metal mask were with AuGe/Ni/Au metal, since it is easy to include an extra wafer

in an ordinary evaporation. The results after etching were variable, but in some cases the etch profile was quite acceptable. Some irregularities, including frequent pitting of the metal during the etch, discouraged further work on AuGe. When it was reported that Pt-Au (1000-2000 Å, respectively) was an acceptable gate mask as well as a low resistance contact to GaAs,<sup>6</sup> it was tried and used with considerable success. Some procedures described in Ref. 6 had to be modified. The 3-minute alloy of the Pt-Au had to be done before the AuGe evaporation and after the gate etch. If the Pt-Au alloy precedes the gate etch, the gate metal peels off from many gates if any citric acid etching follows. This indicates a very shallow alloy of the Pt-Au, which may be useful. After the AuGe/Ni/Au self-aligned metal was evaporated, the usual 15-sec, 450°C alloy was done. Figure 9 shows an example of a gate etch profile using Pt-Au as a mask. Pt-Au also lowered the gate resistance of the HJFETs, as will be shown later.

## 2.2 p-n Junctions

The principal aim of this HJFET technology is normally-off FETs for logic circuits. The built-in voltage of the heterojunction is larger than that of a metal Schottky contact, meaning that a larger voltage swing results and thicker epitaxial layers can be used. The p-n junction must live up to expectations, however, in order to achieve these goals. We therefore began to observe I-V and C-V characteristics of 20-mil dot heterojunctions once good FETs were achieved.

With the N-Off HJFETs, the forward gate current invariably reaches the same scale as the ( $V_g = 0$  to +1V) source-drain saturation current at +1-1.2V on the gate, as will be shown later. This is not as high as one would expect if the heterojunction behaved like a Schottky barrier with a built-in voltage of about 1.4V, nor was such an I-V characteristic observed with the 20-mil heterojunction dots. Despite one claim that the p-AlGaAs/n-GaAs heterojunction behaves like a Schottky barrier with

Pt/Au Metal Mask Expt  
-M 965 13,160 X 3 min at  
⑧ Sum practice gates 8 sec HF  
12-5-80



Fig. 9 Gate etch using PtAu as a mask.

built-in voltage  $V_{bi} = 1.36V$  and a nonlinearity factor of 1.57,<sup>7</sup> most observers of AlGaAs/GaAs p-n heterojunctions (in addition to AlGaAs and GaAs p-n junctions) report much higher current density scaling constants and nonideality factors of about 2, both because of surface recombination.<sup>8-10</sup> Our forward I-V characteristics (Fig. 10 is typical) were in strong agreement with Refs. 8-10. Figure 10 is an I-V characteristic for a 20-mil dot growth interface heterojunction; i.e., processed in the same way as the FETs. Grown p-n junctions (both AlGaAs/GaAs and GaAs p-n homojunctions) had only slightly lower current densities. C-V characteristics for all of the grown junctions and most of the growth interface heterojunctions gave built-in voltages of 1.3-1.4V. Occasionally, the growth interface heterojunction would appear to have  $V_{bi} = 1-1.1V$ , probably because of interface states.<sup>11</sup> But if any of the I-V characteristics was subjected to the thermionic emission analysis of Ref. 7,  $V_{bi}$  would be 1 to 1.06V, clearly out of line with the more believable C-V results.

### 2.3 HJFET Results

#### 2.3.1 3- $\mu$ m HJFETs with VPE Active Layers

The first successful HJFETs having OM gate layers were fabricated with VPE n-GaAs active layers, used the 5- $\mu$ m gate mask, and had all connections metallized with AuGe/Ni/Au. The first HJFET with really satisfactory performance was normally-on, as intended, and I-V characteristics appear in Fig. 11. Saturation currents in this and other HJFETs approximately follow a square law:

$$I_{ds} = KZ(V_g - V_t)^2$$

where  $V_g$  is the gate voltage,  $V_t$  is the threshold voltage,  $Z$  the gate periphery, and  $K$  is a scaling constant. The scaling constant,  $K$ , is therefore

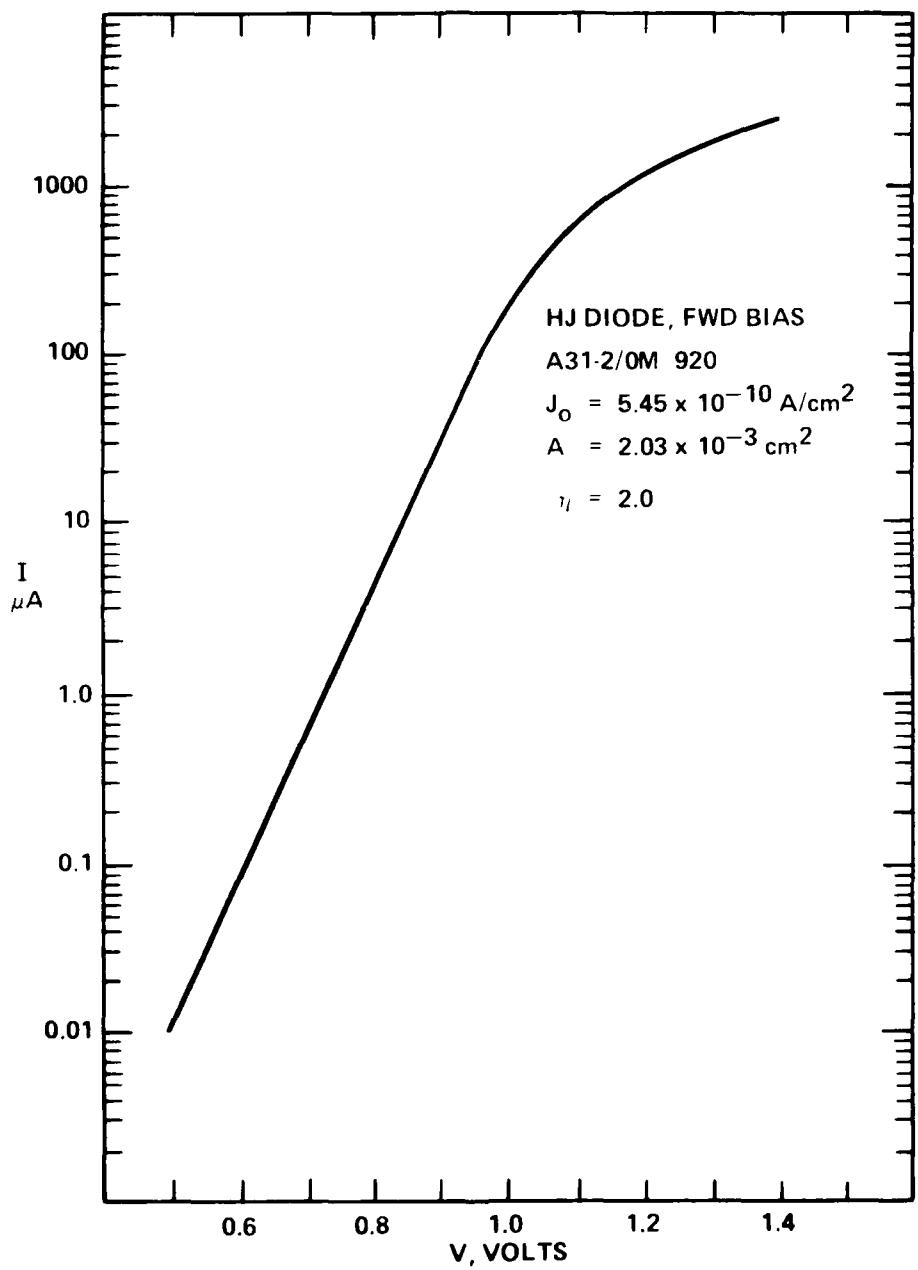
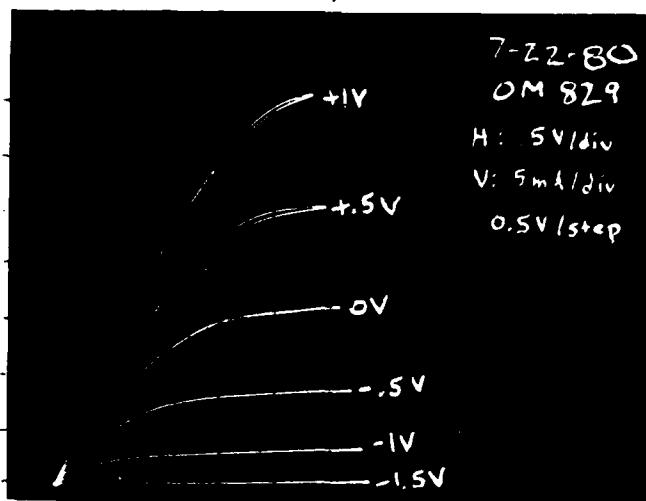
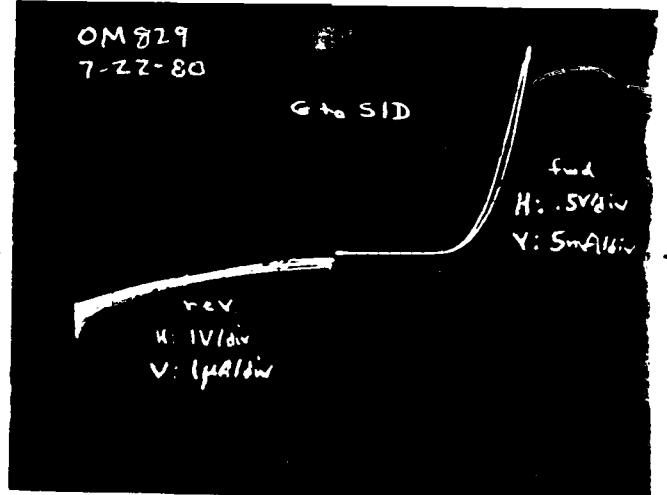


Fig. 10 I-V for 20-mil HJ diode on A31-2/OM 920.



a) FET I-V characteristic.

$K = 35$



b) Gate to source/drain.

Fig. 11 VPE/OM N-On HJFET.

a measure of transistor performance and will, for simplicity, be used to compare FETs. The units of  $K$  given in the figures are  $\mu\text{A}/\mu\text{m-V}^2$ .

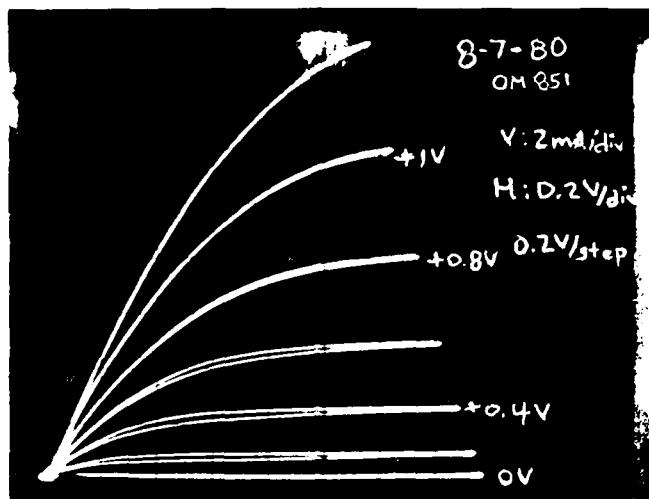
After appropriate thinning of a VPE layer and growth of OM gates, normally-off FETs resulted over part of the wafer.  $K = 40 \mu\text{A}/\mu\text{m-V}^2$  was achieved, and the I-V result is in Fig. 12.

MBE gate layers were tried once with a VPE active layer, but without significant results. The source-drain currents were reasonable ( $K = 33 \mu\text{A}/\mu\text{m-V}^2$ ), but the forward gate characteristic was impeded by a resistive layer. The unavailability of in situ etch techniques for the MBE gate growth may have been responsible for this difficulty. Al percentage in the AlGaAs was not easy to control for the MBE and so not much further work was done on MBE gates.

### 2.3.2 3- $\mu\text{m}$ HJFETs with MBE Active Layers

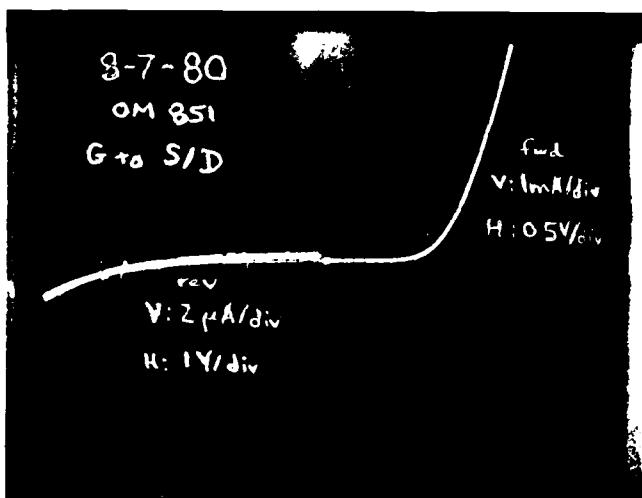
The first attempts to fabricate HJFETs having MBE active layers and OM gates resulted in very leaky devices because of surface defects in the MBE material. The MBE material soon improved, just as it was becoming clear that threshold voltage control was very difficult to do by thinning VPE layers. The normally-off MBE/OM HJFETs of Fig. 13, with  $K = 53 \mu\text{A}/\mu\text{m-V}^2$ , performed better than any previous HJFETs. In addition, the yield over two wafers (MBE 530 and MBE 537) was high, and the threshold voltage ranged from 0 to  $+0.2\text{V}$ , a tolerance made possible by the extreme uniformity of MBE.

MBE gates were tried once on a mesa etched MBE active layer but the resulting FETs were leaky because of the leakiness of the active layer material. When the OM gate process proved so successful, MBE gates were not attempted any further.



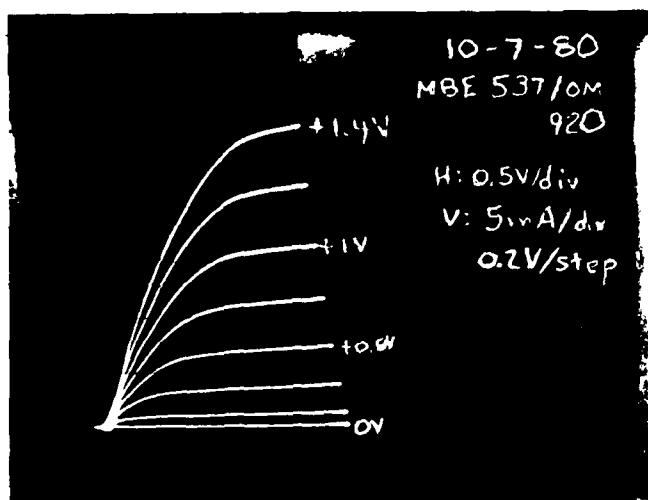
a) FET I-V characteristic.

$K = 40$



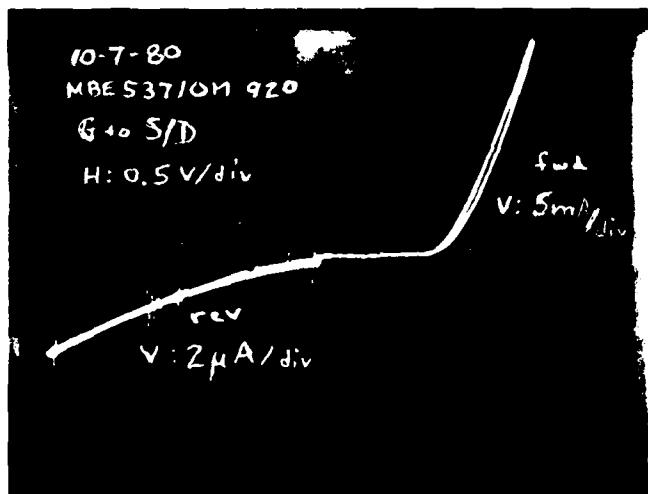
b) Gate to source/drain.

Fig. 12 VPE/OM N-Off HJFET.



a) FET I-V characteristic.

K = 53



b) Gate to source/drain.

Fig. 13 MBE 537/0M 920, HJFETs.

### 2.3.3 OM and Ion-Implanted Active Layers

The only process alternatives of Fig. 4 not discussed thus far are the use of ion implantation and OM for active layers. One ion-implanted layer (Si, 100 keV,  $2 \times 10^{12}/\text{cm}^2$ ), was run through the OM gate process and metallized, but the devices suffered from source/gate shorts. This may have been because a single-dose implant will have less dopant near the surface and thus can acquire a deeper p-converted layer because of Zn diffusion. A double implant, or a very accurate monitoring of the cleanup etch of the p-converted layer (Sec. 2.1.4), was felt to be necessary for ion-implanted active layers, and no further work on them was done.

At present, the biggest challenge facing OM epitaxy for FET active layers is the substrate-channel interface. Undoped buffer layers are likely to be more heavily doped than VPE or MBE buffer layers, and the difficulties of growing directly on Cr-doped substrates are well known. A few attempts were made (on another contract) at OM growth of Se-doped active layers on undoped substrates. One of these resulted in a 2-2.5V pinchoff,  $5 \times 10^{16}/\text{cm}^3$  layer, and so it was processed with the OM HJFET schedule using the 2- $\mu\text{m}$  gate mask. Figure 14 is the I-V characteristic of the resulting 1- $\mu\text{m}$  gate FETs. The large loops occurred with every device and indicate a problem with traps at the substrate-channel interface. Recently,  $\text{SiH}_4$  has been shown by the Varian OM Group to be a controllable n-type dopant gas, better than  $\text{H}_2\text{Se}$ .

### 2.3.4 1- $\mu\text{m}$ Pt-Au Gate HJFETs

The Pt-Au gate process, described earlier, was successfully used with the 2- $\mu\text{m}$  gate mask to fabricate narrow-gate HJFETs. The first successful run, MBE 609/OM 1036, was being processed as it was discovered that any narrow gates must be parallel to the etch pits (see

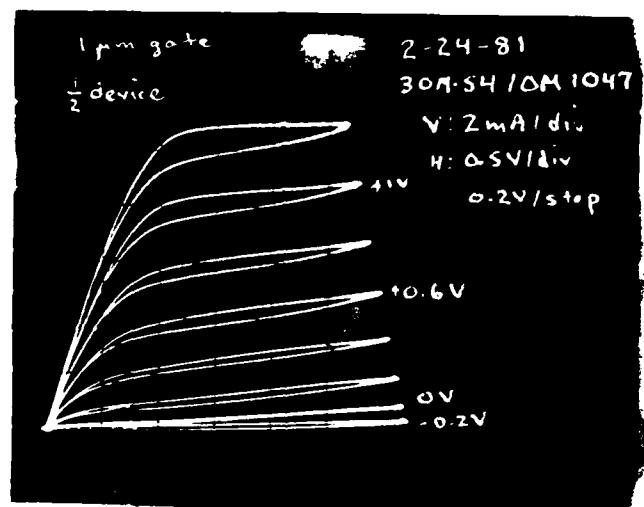


Fig. 14       $1 \times 150 \mu\text{m}$  gate HJFET made with  
 $5 \times 10^{16}/\text{cm}^3$  Se-doped OM active layer

Sec. 2.1.3), and so the run was saved from certain destruction by double exposing the gate mask in the parallel direction to give the device shown in Fig. 15. Because of the double exposure, the average gate width was about 1.5  $\mu\text{m}$ . Some good normally-on HJFETs resulted (Fig. 16), with low reverse leakage and low gate resistance. A later run of 1- $\mu\text{m}$  Pt-Au gate HJFETs (MBE 530/ OM 1091) gave similar low gate resistance but was more leaky (the MBE active layer was fogged) and  $K$  was lower, at 27  $\mu\text{A}/\mu\text{m} \cdot \text{V}^2$ .

Normally-on HJFETs with 7-8V pinchoff were fabricated with a VPE active layer and OM gates to give the results shown in Fig. 17. Despite slight  $g_m$  compression near  $V_g = 0$ ,  $I_{dss}$  (70 mA) is higher than that of a similar N-On device made by VPE/LPE,<sup>2</sup> and equal to that of a reported HJFET with 12V pinchoff.<sup>6</sup> Reverse gate leakage was so low (5 nA at -6V in one case) that it was difficult to photograph.

An illustration of the gate resistance improvement of Pt-Au over AuGe as a gate metal is shown in Fig. 18. Both FETs had 1- $\mu\text{m}$  gates and comparable source-drain characteristics, and the asymptotic behavior of the forward gate curve indicates an improvement in gate resistance of a factor of 3 or 4.

### 2.3.5 RF Tests

Two HJFETs were rf tested from 2-14 GHz on the automatic network analyzer, one N-Off FET with 3- $\mu\text{m}$  AuGe gates (MBE 537/OM 920), and one N-On FET with 1- $\mu\text{m}$  Pt-Au gates ( $V_t = -0.8\text{V}$ , MBE 609/OM 1036). The measured y-parameters were used in a simplified circuit model program and the source resistance was measured by dc methods to give the results in Figs. 19 and 20. The most striking result was the lower rf gate resistance measured for the Pt-Au gate. Although some variation with frequency was observed with this crude circuit model, the basic

MBE 609/OM 1036 HJFET 2-11-81  
⑪ 2 μm  
Pt-Au gates

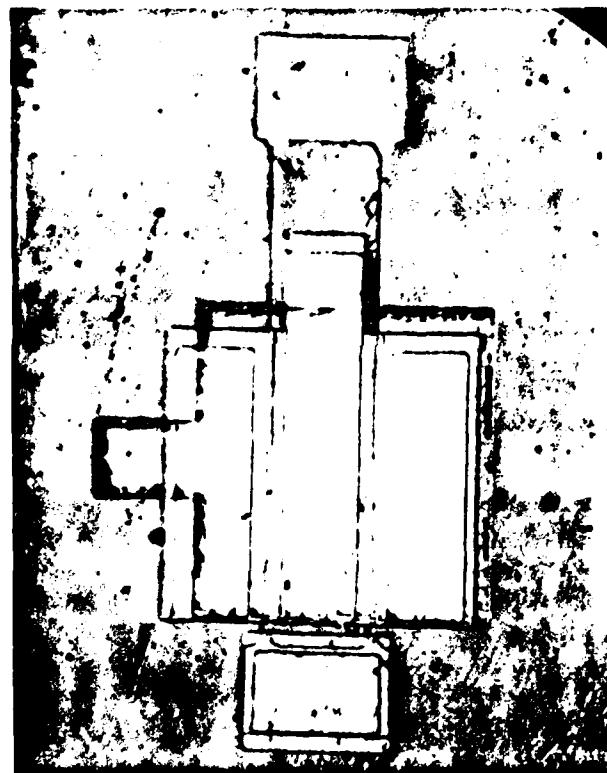
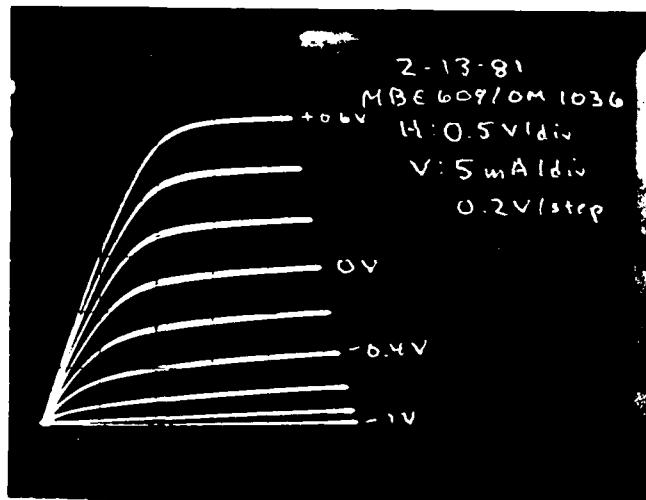
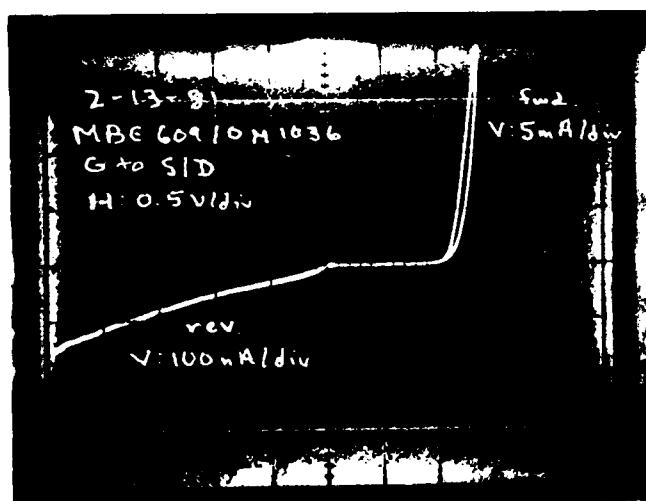


Fig. 15 Top view of MBE 609/OM 1036 HJFET with Pt-Au gates.



a) FET I-V characteristic.

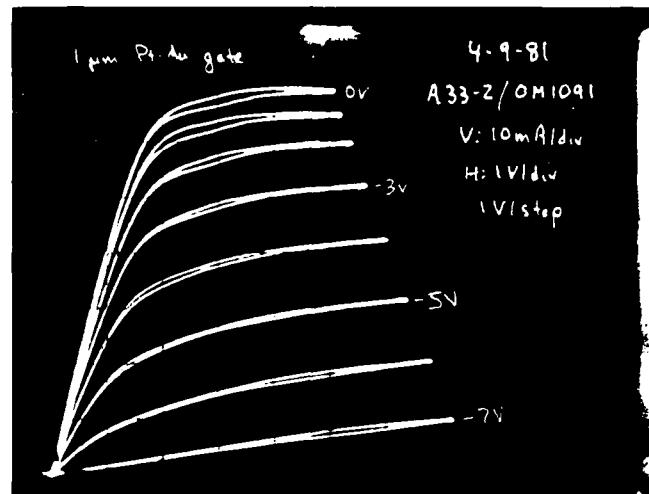
K = 55



b) Gate to source/drain.

Fig. 16 1- $\mu$ m Pt-Au gate HJFET.

a) FET characteristic,  
 $V_t = -8V$



b) Gate to source/drain;  
forward voltage

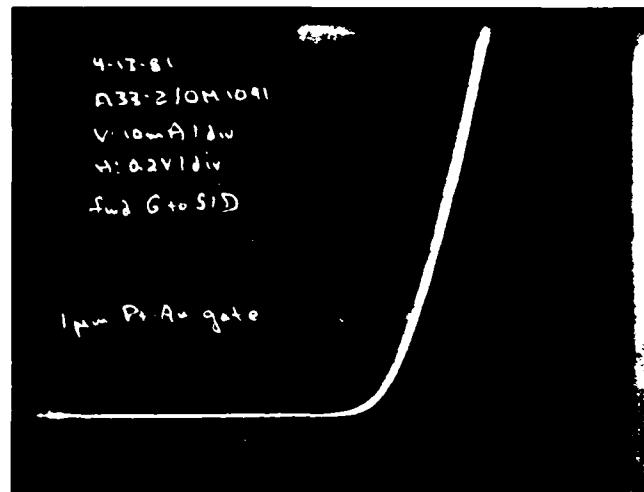


Fig. 17 VPE/OM N-On HJFET with 1- $\mu m$  Pt-Au gates.

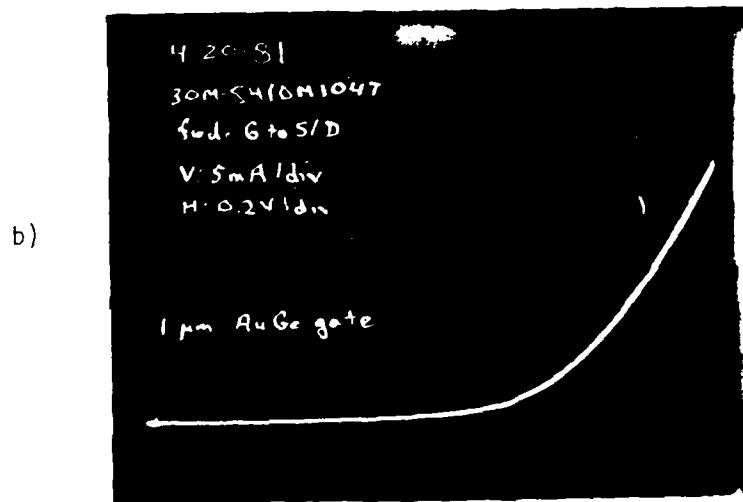
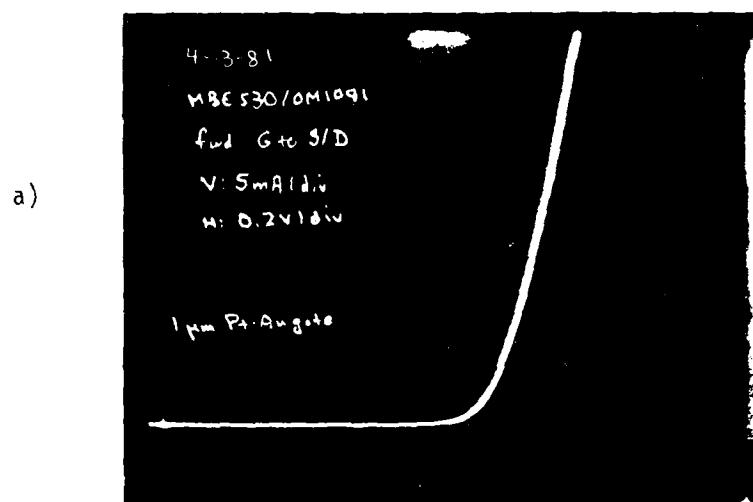
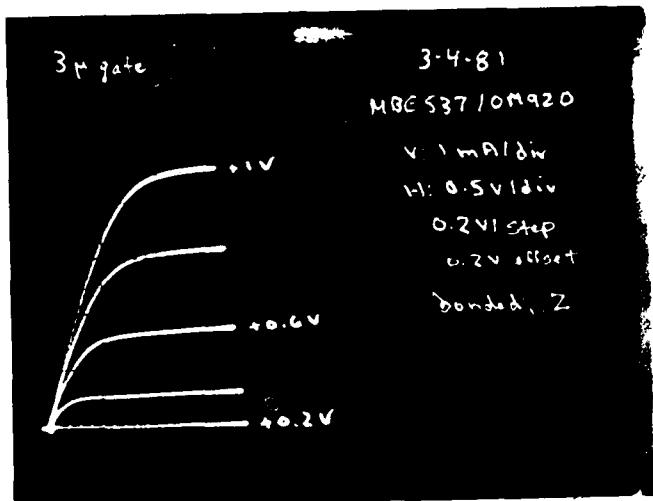


Fig. 18 Forward gate characteristic compared for  
a) Pt-Au and b) Au-Ge 1- $\mu$ m gates.

N-Off HJFET



Au-Ge/Ni/Au gate, 3  $\mu$ m

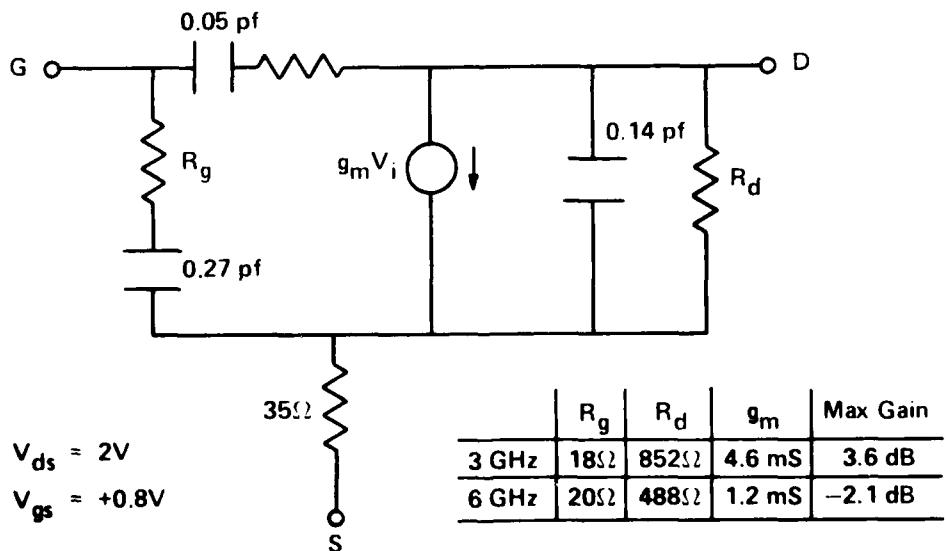
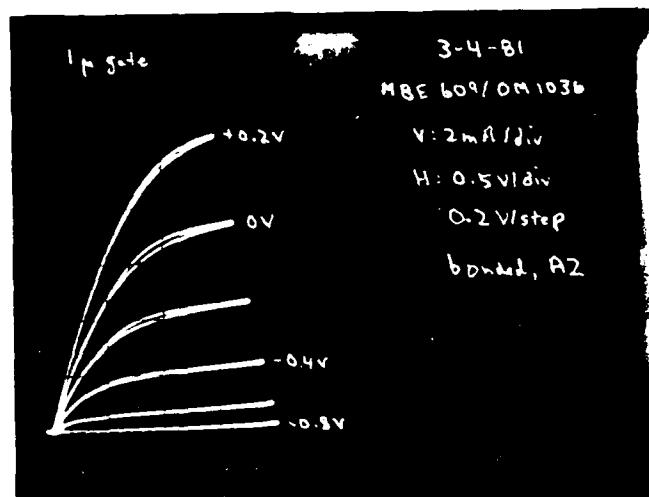


Fig. 19 RF characterization of MBE 537/0M 920 HJFET.

N-On HJFET



Pt-Au gate, 1  $\mu$ m

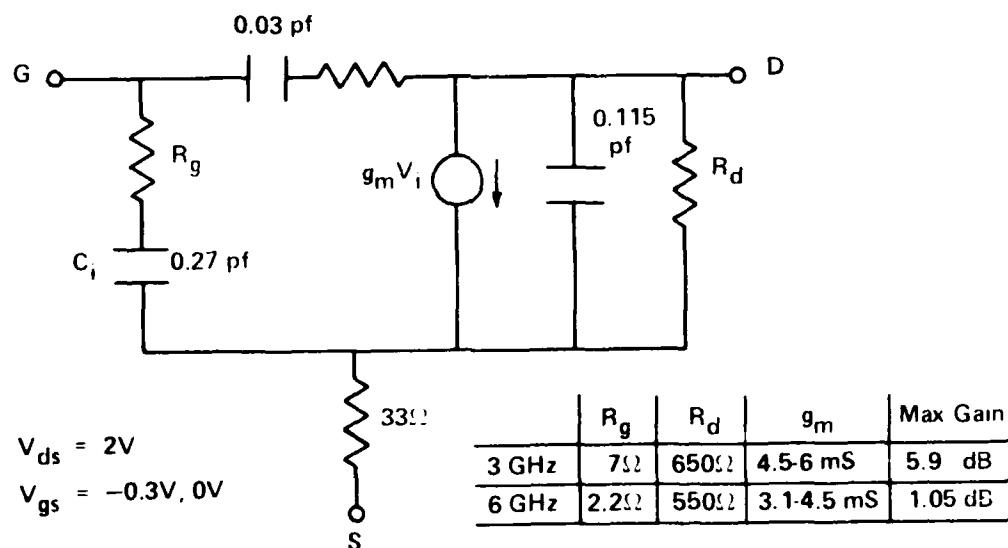


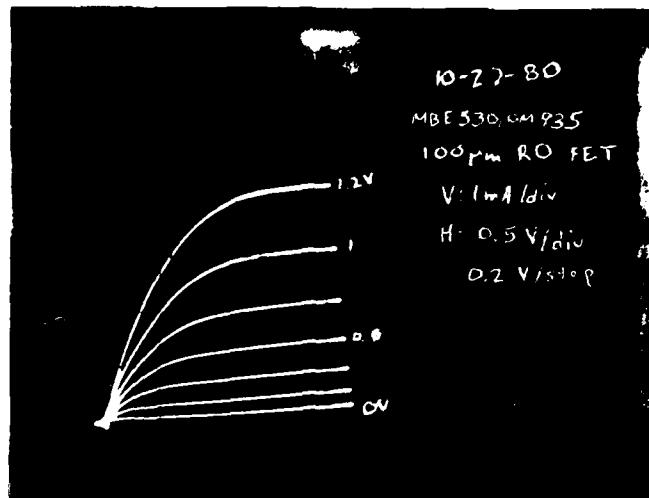
Fig. 20 RF characterization of MBE 609/OM 1036 HJFET.

gate resistance result is supported by the fact that  $g_{21}$  (the real part of the admittance parameter  $y_{21}$ , strongly dependent on the current source  $g_m v_i$ ) drops very steeply for the AuGe gates, but not for the Pt-Au gates.

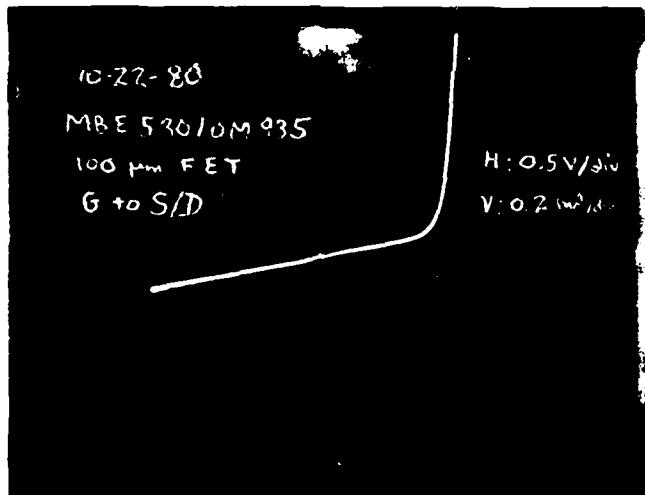
The FETs tested could have been better and, had budget constraints allowed, more rf tests would have been performed. Any further rf tests should be done on devices with low gate leakage currents as well as high saturation currents. The gate leakage current for the tested FETs was on the 100- $\mu$ A scale and may have interferred with the formation of a gate-drain space charge domain, leading to the unexpectedly high gate-drain feedback capacitance.

### 2.3.6 Ring Oscillators

The ring oscillator mask set, originally designed some years ago for MESFET ring oscillators (ROs), was used in several attempts to fabricate HJFET ROs and inverters. Reference 3 contains a description of the mask layout and the slight variations on the HJFET process that are used. Soon after the successful N-Off MBE 530/OM 920 HJFETs were fabricated, another piece of the same wafer was used with the RO mask set to give acceptable N-Off HJFETs with  $3 \times 100 \mu\text{m}$  gates, but with unexpectedly high gate leakage (Fig. 21). Figure 22 gives the inverter load's 2-terminal I-V characteristic and the rather poor voltage transfer characteristic. The photographs in Figs. 21 and 22 were prepared before some subtle points were recognized. When the mesa fields were etched as described in Sec. 2.1.4 to cut leakage, the much improved gate I-V and transfer characteristic of Fig. 23 resulted. But because the output voltage for zero input was nowhere near the supply voltage, the stability of the load I-V characteristic was suspected and the experiment indicated by Fig. 24 was done. Circuit ground gates the load I-V characteristic and causes a large voltage to be dropped across the load,



a) FET I-V characteristic.



b) Gate to source/drain.

Fig. 21 MBE 530/OM 935 Ring oscillator, 100  $\mu$ m HJFET.

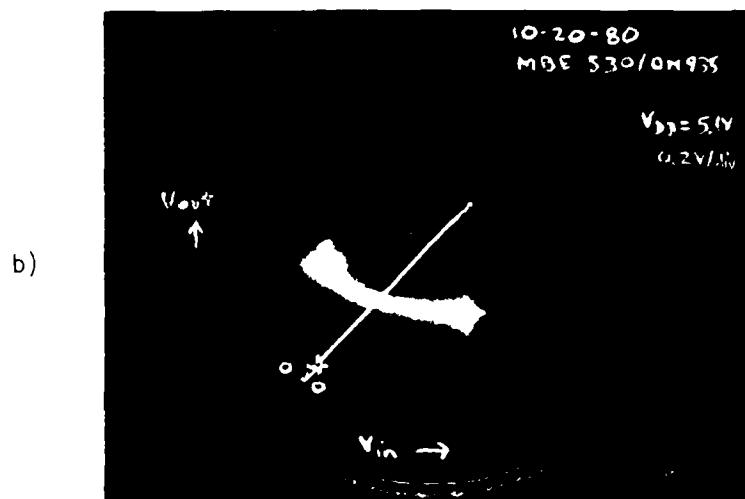
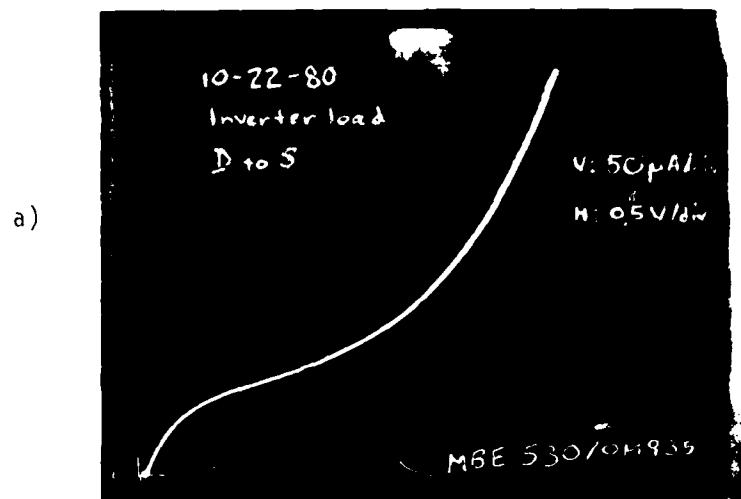
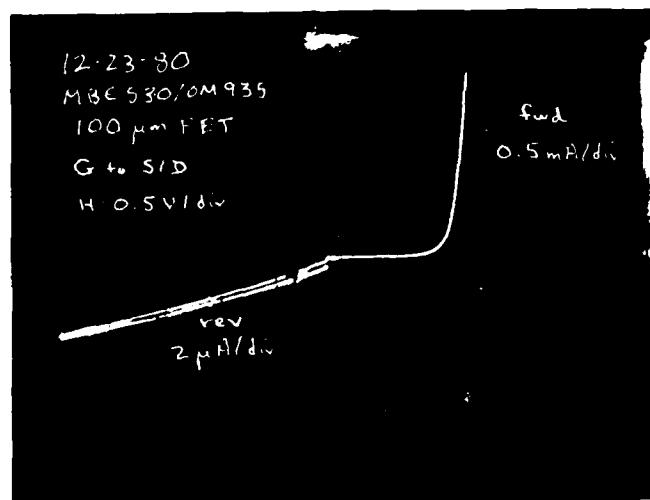
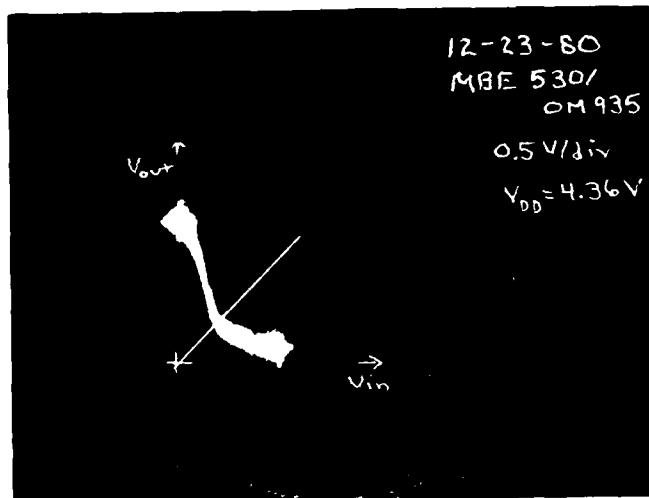


Fig. 22 MBE 530/0M 935 ring oscillator.  
a) inverter load and b) inverter transfer characteristic.



a) Gate to source/drain of FET.



b) Inverter transfer characteristic.

Fig. 23 MBE 530/OM 935 ring oscillator components,  
 after antileakage etch.

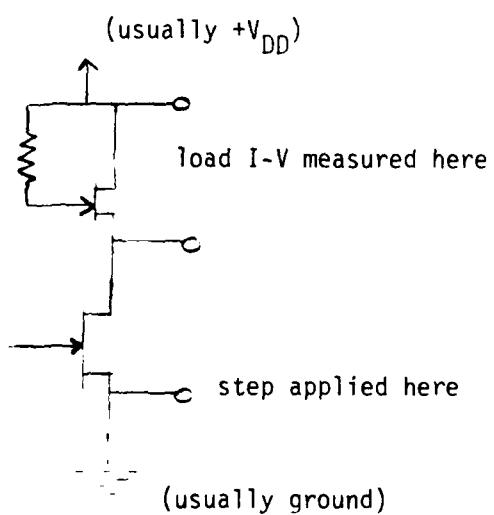
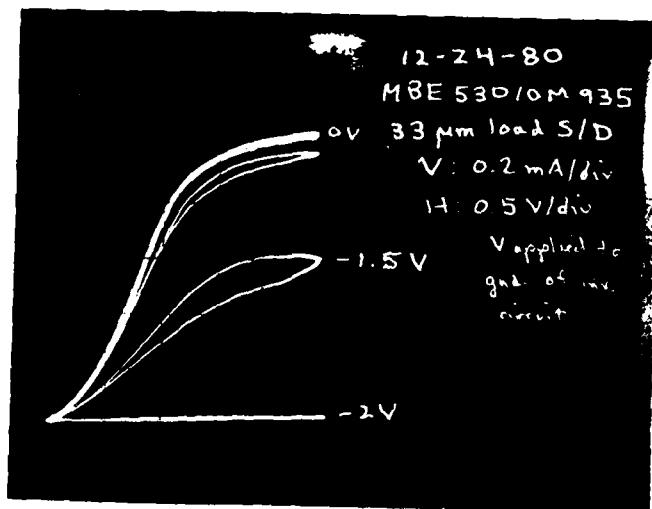


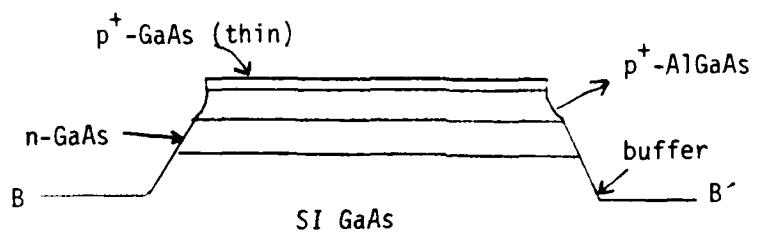
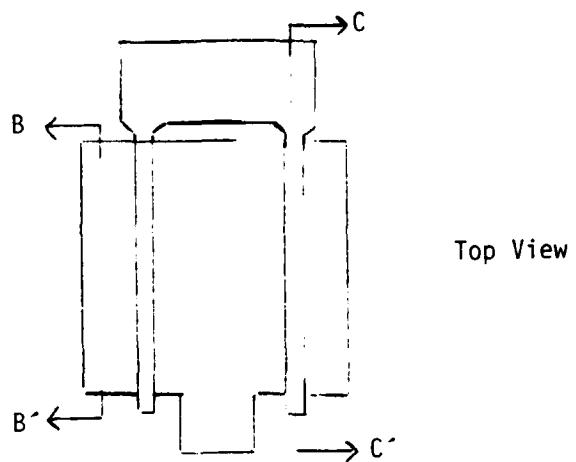
Fig. 24 Influence of circuit ground on inverter load.

even with no input voltage on the inverter, thereby degrading the voltage transfer characteristic. The reason for this is not well understood, but a few other measurements ascertained that the load's bias resistor was in the neighborhood of 100 K ohms, much higher than expected. Thus the load gate was almost floating, susceptible to low voltages nearby which could turn off the load transistor while drawing little current. We tried to remedy this decoupling of load gate and supply voltages by evaporating a small amount of metal on the bias resistor path. For this and one other R0 wafer, the attempt failed, only because of difficulties that arose with existing metal during the extra process step.

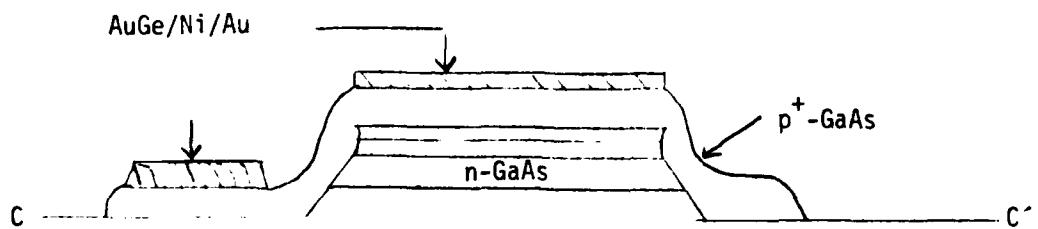
### 3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from the foregoing results that the quality of AlGaAs/GaAs HJFETs has advanced considerably in this work. We have demonstrated  $1 \times 300$  and  $3 \times 300 \mu\text{m}$  normally-on and normally-off HJFETs with record saturation currents, and low gate resistance when Pt-Au is used on the gate. Moreover, the dc performance of these FETs measures up to that of  $1\text{-}\mu\text{m}$  gate ion-implanted GaAs JFETs made by e-beam lithography, also intended for digital IC applications.<sup>12</sup> The HJFET approach offers some advantages over e-beam lithography, since the devices are batch-processed with optical lithography and the  $1\text{-}\mu\text{m}$  (or submicron) gates are achieved with  $2\text{-}\mu\text{m}$  minimum linewidth masks. Also, sidewall capacitance of the gate junction should be lower with the HJFET than with the ion-implanted JFET. Superior rf performance is yet to be demonstrated with the HJFET, since only two unspectacular devices were characterized in this work; however, there is no reason to suspect a fundamental limitation.

The major technological difficulties now associated with the HJFET are reproducibility and yield of the devices. The MBE and OM epitaxial technologies give excellent uniformity of threshold voltage over a wafer, but reproducibility of threshold voltages from run to run is questionable, especially with the growth interface HJFET process. If the grown-junction scheme proposed in Fig. 25 works, it could solve the threshold voltage control problem as well as sidestep wafer preparation before gate growth. The crucial question is whether the final layer of  $p^+ \text{-GaAs}$  will overgrow the mesa properly. The scheme could be tried at Varian now, but it was not really possible in the early part of this program. An MBE approach to step (a) would have had to wait for better AlGaAs, while an OM approach (growing on a VPE or MBE buffer layer) would have had to wait for the n-type dopant to be brought under control.



a) MBE growth of all layers, followed by mesa etch  
(before gate etch).



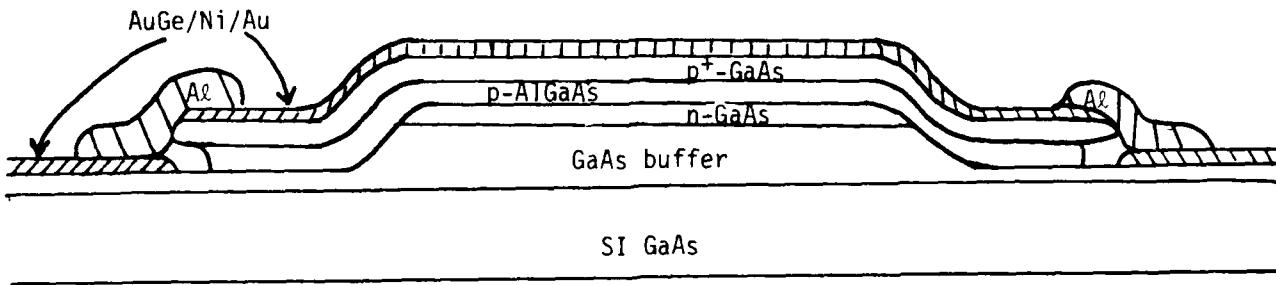
b) OM overgrowth of  $p^+$ -GaAs, followed by usual process.

Fig. 25 Proposed grown junction HJFET with mesa isolation.

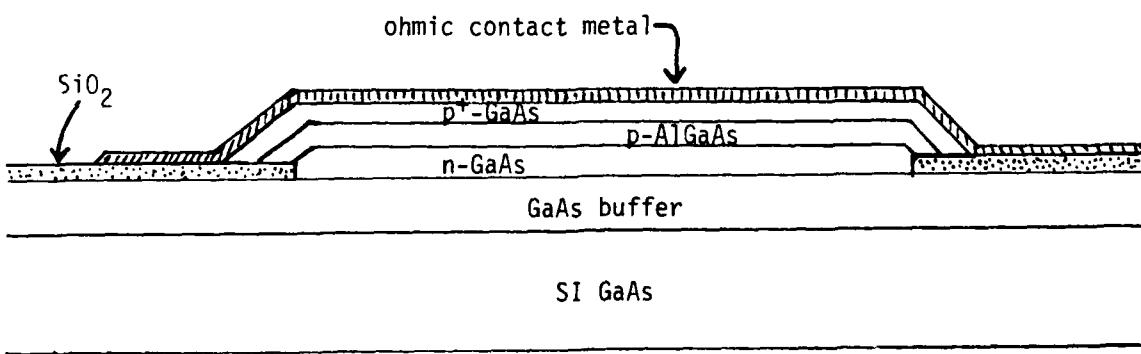
The use of wet chemical etches also contributes to problems with device reproducibility and yield. These etches are adequate for demonstration purposes with single devices or small circuits, but would not be suitable for the ultimate goal, large-scale GaAs ICs. However, wet etches could be adequate if HJFET technology was used for GaAs power FETs. The analogous dry etch processes for GaAs, AlGaAs and other III-V compounds are currently being developed, motivated largely by the desire to process optoelectronic devices.<sup>13-16</sup> A selective etch of GaAs against AlGaAs, the analog of citric acid, seems to be an  $O_2/CCl_2F_2$  plasma etch.<sup>13</sup> While it is known that an HF plasma will not etch GaAs,<sup>15</sup> nothing has yet been published on selective dry etching of AlGaAs against GaAs. Along with many possibilities for selective etching that have not been tried, several endpoint detection techniques are available with dry etch processes, including mass spectrometry and, in the case of reactive ion beam etching (RIBE), sputter yield current monitoring. Given the strong interest in development of dry processes for III-Vs, one can reasonably expect dry etches for the HJFET process to be available in the future.

In an HJFET integrated circuit, there is the problem of connecting to the gate metal that is atop the gate cap layer. Figure 26a shows how the problem is currently solved with the ring oscillators -- a thick layer of Al bridges the gap between gate cap and substrate. A smoother transition to the substrate, without an extra metal layer, could be arranged by using the fact that OM GaAs will grow selectively in holes in  $SiO_2$ , as shown in Fig. 26b. The gates must be aligned along (100) equivalent directions (45° from the cleavage planes) in order to give the desired "ramp". This scheme also produces a grown-junction HJFET.

GaAs digital integrated circuits are at present dominated by ion implantation technologies, which offer the advantage of planar devices. Any alternate scheme must contend with this competition. The MBE pro-



a) Present method, 4000 Å Al.



b) Projected all-OM HJFET, selective growth with gates along (100).

Fig. 26 HJFET metal interconnections.

cess can be planarized by selective growth of GaAs in oxide holes, shown by experiments done at Cornell<sup>17</sup> and verified at Varian. The GaAs grows polycrystalline on the thin (250 Å) oxide and the resulting surface is nearly planar. This technique might be usable with the HJFET, depending on how the resistivity and etch properties of the poly-GaAs turned out. But the resulting circuit would not be planar, since the HJFET is fundamentally a nonplanar device.

These proposed improvements to the HJFET would likely result in better devices for ICs, but the advantages over ion-implanted ICs would be limited and the nonplanarity of the process would have to be tolerated. Because MBE and OM-VPE are capable of multiple layer growth, the nonplanarity of these devices could be extended to give a certain amount of vertical integration, resulting in circuits with higher packing density than could be achieved with ion implantation. Details are discussed in a separate document.<sup>18</sup> Given the heavy financial support for ion-implanted GaAs technologies, we feel that the future of the HJFET and related approaches will hinge on taking full advantage of its nonplanarity and of the unique capabilities of MBE and OM epitaxy. Because the industry has other incentives (e.g., optoelectronic devices) to develop the required process technologies, HJFETs or related devices could yet be seen in the GaAs integrated circuits of the future.

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AlGaAs HETEROJUNCTION GATE GaAs FETs BY ORGANOMETALLIC  
AND MOLECULAR BEAM EPITAXY\*

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AlGaAs heterojunction gate GaAs FETs (HJFETs) have been proposed for high-speed logic because of their self-aligned features and high built-in voltage, and have previously been produced by growing liquid-phase epitaxial gate layers on a mesa-etched n-GaAs active layer so that low capacitance and high-speed switching can be achieved.<sup>1</sup> This work concerns the use of organometallic vapor phase epitaxy (OM-VPE) and molecular beam epitaxy (MBE), which lead to superior results because of enhanced uniformity and reproducibility. Process steps such as a plasma ash and *in situ* heat cleaning of the mesa-etched layer before OM-VPE gate growth must be taken in order to ensure that the interface is clean and free of carbon contamination. Moreover, a very thin (200 Å) p<sup>+</sup>-GaAs layer between the n-GaAs channel and the p<sup>+</sup>-AlGaAs helps to isolate the actual p<sup>+</sup>n gate junction from oxygen that is gettered into AlGaAs grown by OM-VPE. C-V measurements indicate a 1.3V built-in voltage for this junction, while forward I-V characteristics give a nonideality factor n=2 and are similar to those of a GaAs p n junction. Thus the electrical characteristics of the heterojunction are retained, along with the advantages of selective undercut etching and self-aligned metal.

Since normally-off HJFETs are desired for direct coupling of logic circuits, control of threshold voltage is very important. Although HJFETs with record high saturation currents were produced with buffered active layers grown by both chloride transport VPE and MBE, extremely good threshold voltage control (variations of 0.1-0.2V over a 1 cm<sup>2</sup> wafer) was achieved with MBE. Saturation currents for normally-off HJFETs followed a square law and were the highest ever observed, greater than 50  $\mu$ A/ $\mu$ m<sup>2</sup>-V<sup>2</sup> for 3 x 300  $\mu$ m and 1 x 300  $\mu$ m gate devices. Pt-Au gate metal, as proposed by LEP,<sup>2</sup> is especially useful for achieving self-aligned, undercut-etched 1- $\mu$ m devices.

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\*Some preliminary results were reported at the Semiconductor Interface Specialists' Conference, Dec. 1980 (abstracts not distributed).

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